

Message Text

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 07258 031429Z

64

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13

AID-05 SCCT-01 EB-07 /083 W
----- 104724

R 030941Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1679

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BEIRUT 7258

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, LE, SY

SUBJECT: ATTITUDES OF INDEPENDENT WEST BEIRUT NEWSPAPERS

1. SUMMARY: INDEPENDENT BEIRUT DAILIES AN NAHAR AND L'ORIENT LE JOUR, AS MATTER OF EDITORIAL DECISION, ARE HEAVILY SUPPORTING PRESIDENT SARKIS AS ONLY APPARENT HOPE FOR LEBANESE SOLUTION TO LEBANESE WAR. PRIVATELY, EDITORIAL LEADERSHIP IS PESSIMISTIC AND PARTICULARLY CONCERNED ABOUT MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH LEBANON. PARTITION DEEMED ALMOST INEVITABLE. AN NAHAR LEADERSHIP HAS MANOEVERED TO RELIEVE PLO PRESSURE, BUT BOTH PAPERS REMAIN HIGHLY SENSITIVE TO PLO FEELINGS ON ISSUES. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBOFF CALLED SEPTEMBER 1 ON FRANCOIS AQL, SENIOR EDITOR OF LEADING INDEPENDENT DAILY AN NAHAR, AND ON CAMILLE MENASSA, ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR OF L'ORIENT LE JOUR. BOTH NEWSPAPERS OCCUPY SAME BUILDING IN DOWNTOWN WEST BEIRUT, AND SHARE CERTAIN FACILITIES, BUT ARE EDITORIALY SEPARATE.

3. WAITING FOR SARKIS. EMBOFF TOOK NOTE OF HEAVY
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 07258 031429Z

COVERAGE OF SARKIS' AUGUST 31 VISIT TO DAMASCUS AND

EXTENSIVE SPECULATION IN BOTH AN NAHAR AND L'ORIENT ON MODALITIES OF HIS EXPECTED ASSUMPTION OF POWER LATE IN SEPTEMBER. (AN NAHAR HAS FRONT-PAGED LONG SERIES OF ARTICLES BY GHASSAN TUENI, PUBLISHER OF AN NAHAR AND MINISTER OF LABOR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS, TOURISM, AND PETROLEUM AND INDUSTRY, ENTITLED "WAITING FOR SARKIS.") AQL SAID HE BELIEVED SARKIS' ASSUMPTION OF POWER AMOUNTED TO "LAST CHANCE" FOR LEBANON. NOTHING ELSE HAS WORKED. ODDS AGAINST SARKIS ARE ENORMOUS. HE LACKS ANY DOMESTIC POWER BASE -- OTHER, PERHAPS, THAN HIS OLD CHEHABIST G-2 CONNECTIONS. BOTH AQL AND MENASSA WERE DEEPLY PESSIMISTIC ABOUT CURRENT LEBANESE IMPASSE, BUT SAID THEY FELT IT THEIR DUTY TO EMPHASIZE HOPEFUL ELEMENTS IN SITUATION. AQL USED METAPHOR OF THE DROWNING MAN WHO CLUTCHES AT SMALL REED. COMMENT: BOTH AQL AND MENASSA SEEMED TO ESCHEW IDEA THAT SARKIS WAS, OR WOULD BECOME, SYRIAN PUPPET. THEIR PICTURE OF THE MAN WAS OF A LEBANESE PATRIOT WHO WILL DO WHAT HE CAN FOR LEBANON IN EXTREMELY DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES.

4. PARTITION AND SYRIAN INTENTIONS. AQL SAID HE FOUND MUCH MERIT IN "CONSPIRACY THEORY" AS ADVOCATED BY EDDE AND OTHERS. PARTITION IS ALREADY A REALITY IN EVERYTHING BUT NAME. SYRIANS MIGHT STAY IN BEKAA AND AKKAR FOREVER. HE IS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT ISRAELI INTENTIONS IN SOUTH AND HAS FEELING THAT FOCUS OF MILITARY ACTIVITY IN LEBANON MAY WELL SHIFT TO SOUTHERN SECTOR, PARTICULARLY AROUND JEZZINE.

5. LEBANESE PROBLEM AND MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM. AQL SAID THAT, WHATEVER THE ORIGINS OF LEBANESE WAR, CLEARLY PALESTINIAN STATUS HAD BECOME CENTRAL ISSUE. SOLUTION IN LEBANON THEREFORE COULD NOT BE SEPARATED FROM OVERALL MIDDLE EAST SOLUTION.

6. AN NAHAR'S PALESTINIAN PROBLEM. IN RESPONSE TO EMBOFF QUESTION ABOUT RECENT QUARREL BETWEEN AN NAHAR AND PLO (BEIRUT 7146), MENASSA SAID THAT ISSUE HAD, IN EFFECT, BEEN AMICABLY RESOLVED. AFTER AN NAHAR EDITOR-IN-CHIEF ABU JAWDEH HAD THREATENED TO MAKE EMBARRASSING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 07258 031429Z

REVELATIONS ABOUT PLO PRESSURES ON PAPER UNLESS PLO PUBLICLY ASSERTED ITS RESPECT FOR PAPER'S INDEPENDENCE, PLO GAVE AN NAHAR PRIVATE ASSURANCES. AN NAHAR IS SATISFIED AND REGARDS STORY AS CLOSED. MENASSA AGREED WITH EMBOFF'S OBSERVATION THAT L'ORIENT AND AN NAHAR SELDOM PUBLISH INFORMATION WHICH REFLECTED BADLY ON PLO. HE SAID, WITH A WRY SMILE, THAT DISCRETION WAS BETTER PART OF VALOR AND ADDED THAT FREEDOM OF THE

PRESS IN LEBANON WAS INDEED GRADUALLY ERODING AWAY.
LANE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, CIVIL DISORDERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 SEP 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BEIRUT07258
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760335-0838
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760995/aaaadcwu.tel
Line Count: 117
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <09 JUN 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <06 OCT 2004 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ATTITUDES OF INDEPENDENT WEST BEIRUT NEWSPAPERS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, SOPN, LE, SY
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006